THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL): (a) Abundant natural resources offer vast scope for capital formation and investment. However, this scope can be availed of fully only if the finances of the State are first put on a sound footing.

(b) to (d) The Ministry of Finance have not received any memorandum either from the State Government of Orissa or from any other organisation for grant of the status of a Special Category State to Orissa following the Super Cyclone. Grant of such status would depend on a variety of economic and other considerations and not on natural calamities. The final authority competent to recommend grant of such status is the National Development Council.

Projects pending assistance from World Bank and IMF

5401. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of projects pending for last two years on which the assistance from World Bank/International Monetary Fund has been sought;

(b) whether any assurance as to the release of funds with regard to these projects was received by the Finance Minister during his meeting with World Bank President recently in Washington; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL): (a) There are 4 projects which were negotiated prior to May 1998 but have not yet been approved by the World Bank Board. These four projects relating to power, roads & renewable energy sector are not seen as supporting basic human needs. IMF does not provide financial assistance for projects.

(b) and (c) Finance Minister met World Bank President Mr. Wolfensohn at Washington on 15.4.2000. Mr. Wolfensohn indicated that in view of the improved climate created by President Clinton's visit to India, Bank would take steps to consider all pending projects expeditiously.

Popularisation of Kisan Credit Card Scheme in Karnataka

5402. SHRI K.C. KONDAIAH: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Kisan Credit Cards issued by various nationalised banks in Karnataka so far;

(b) whether Government are aware that a large number of farmers are not aware of this facility; and

(c) the steps proposed to be taken to popularise the above facility in Karnataka?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL): (a) As per the latest data submitted by public sector banks to Reserve Bank of India (RBI) 1,92,965 Kisan Credit Cards (KCC) have been issued in Karnataka upto the end of January, 2000;

(b) and (c) RBI has advised the public sector banks and Indian Banks' Association (IBA) to give wide publicity through print and electronic media regarding the implementation of the KCC Scheme. In addition, State Level Bankers' committee (SLBC) convenors have also been advised to organise State level meetings to explain the salient features of the scheme to the Senior Officers of banks officials of the State Government and progressive farmers. Lead Banks in the Districts have also been advised to arrange similar meetings to explain the scheme to District Collectors and other district level functionaries, banks and farmers at district level.

P.G. Mankad Committee Report

5403. SHRI R.S. GAVAI: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received the report of P.G. Mankad Committee constituted to suggest the measures to bring down high transaction costs of exporters;

(b) if so, the main recommendations thereof;

(c) whether the Government have examined the recommendations of the Committee; and

(d) the reaction of the Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) The High Powered Committee set up under the chairmanship of Revenue and Finance Secretary to go into the problems faced by exporters in the form of High Transaction Costs related to foreign trade licensing, tax procedures and banking system etc. has since submitted its report in which wide ranging recommendations have been made. These recommendations are aimed at reducing and rationalising the procedural complexities, in order to